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LEAVES ON THE WIND

S. MICHAEL CREVEQUER



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Leaves on the Wind



LEAVES ON THE WIND

By
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To M. G. B.

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*"To follow a leaf on the wind,
And joy in the following:
. . . . Wisdom the highest this,
Mortal so shalt thou live,
And living, heed not the scorn
Of the gods in their lonely bliss."* . . .

—SEUMAS O'SULLIVAN.

Contents

	Page
Manannán	1
Deirdre	6
The Dancer	8
Death	10
April	11
Cendres d'Or	13
The Childhood of Salome	15
Song for his Lady to whom he offereth Tulips and Lilac	17
Vassalage	18
The Friar	19
"The Charm of Michael with the Shield"	20
The Student	23
Vision	24

LEAVES ON THE WIND

Manannán

“ O SAY thou son of Ireland
What chieftain holds thy love?”

“ A chieftain of the mountains
Where the restless shadows move.” . . .

“ And son of Ireland tell me
The king that rules thy dreams?”

“ A king of sea and bogland
Where the silver starlight gleams.” . . .

“ Whence came thy king and chieftain?”

“ Over the waters dim
At dusk I saw him riding
And I gave my dreams to him.

“ He came from the hidden countries
Where the fire of Angus glows
And I knew he had left the Bright Ones
For love of the wild Dark Rose.

“ Out of the West he galloped
Where lie the hidden lands
Dark and wild and slender
With lightning in his hands.

“ In mists and fleeting rainbows
Over the seas he came
Swift as the breath of beauty
Fair as the spirit's flame.

“ He rode from the stormy sunset
Where a fiery poppy shone,
And the young moon flew before him
Like a trembling silver swan.

“ The joyous stars pursued him,
In dancing flaming crowds,
But he caught them and tossed them lightly
To the grey low-flying clouds.

“ Strange, ah strange, was his mantle
Most strange and shadowy,
With the dim blue-green of the mountains
And the swift green-blue of the sea.

“ A sapphire and an emerald
Upon his sword hilt were,
And on his brow was gleaming
A star enchanted-fair.

“ The rain—the rain was with him
Sorrowful, laughing-sweet!
And the dreaming leaves of autumn
Flew out from his horse's feet.

“ The night and the morning loved him,
And the slender twilight hours :
And his path was strewn with incense
From the cups of the bending flowers.

“ The still and the running waters
Leapt up to see him pass,
And the shadows bent in homage
Down to the sighing grass.

• “ And there on the lonely bogland
I bared my untried sword
And bowed with the bending shadows
In homage to my lord.

.
“ Ah the wet leaves from the mountains
Come blowing through the air
And the mist is on my eyelids
And the mist is on my hair.

“ And I see the wise at their dancing
And I hear the fairy mirth
But I may not love a mortal
Nor serve a lord of the earth.

“ For I hear the voice of the sea-gulls
For ever making cry

*‘ Across the fields of Ireland
He rideth stormily.’*

“ O my grief for the restless shadows
He leads to the world’s dark rim
For my heart he hath changed to a shadow
And it fain would follow him.

“ O my grief for the leaves that follow
For the wild wet leaves my grief,
He hath left my soul in my body
And my soul is a fluttering leaf.”

Deirdre

IN the dark wood the Son of Usnach came
Upon her suddenly—she seemed a flame
Prisoned in ivory; the crescent moon
Caressed with laughing lips by sunburnt June;
A star disdainful of the heavens' bliss
And fallen earthward for a poppy's kiss,
The slender arrow-shaft that maketh one
The steel barb and the feathers of the swan;
A silver dagger in a damask rose;
Her whiteness like a dawn amid the snows
Emerging from the night cloud of her hair,
Burned fatally in the still forest air.
Round her young brow there shone with scorch-
ing gleams
The fiery halo of her lovers' dreams—
Immortal sign that she shall never be
Undiademmed of immortality.

And he—the brave, the clean, the eagle-bright,
Prophesied beautiful : a dreaming knight
Of that predestined race who may but own
Allegiance to one empery alone;
Nor love the roseate clay of womanhood.
Naisi—foreshown in raven, snow, and blood,
The sorrowful, the crystal-passionate;
Saw her (as when a lily 'neath the weight
Of mortal loveliness appears to swoon
Into a quivering radiance of the moon
Until it seems a soul, a white desire,
A flower fain to tremble into fire),
With earth's wild beauty so illuminate
As to grow one with dream-flame dedicate
To that high altar, starry-pale, divine,
Where burned his vision of the Flower of Kine.

The Dancer

GREEN is the light of the forest,
Green as the sea !
And his feet on the grass of the forest
Tread delicately.

Brown are the wild leaves that flutter
Stormily down :
And his limbs in the shadowy woodland
Flash ivory-brown.

Wild is the song of the autumn,
Mistily sweet :
And the wild secret song of the autumn
Hath sandalled his feet.

Twilight of leaves where he dances
Duskily green ;
And the wind in the dusk of the branches
Doth whisper unseen.

Shadows of rain o'er the grasses
 Fleetingly sweep,
And leave on his lips mystic scarlet
 The kisses of sleep.

Under his sun-caressed eyelids
 Shadowy gleams
A silver of mist in the moonlight,
 A laughter of dreams.

.

O rose petals cling to thy lashes
 Boy of the South!
And the mirth of the sun-curléd poppies
 Entangles thy mouth.

Angus, enhaloed with song birds
 Surely first came
Earthward for love of thy dancing,
 Thou son of the flame!

Death

IF I should die before you I will hide
Around the corner of the infinite,
Crouching in some soft hollow of the night
Plucking the stars, till, mocking death, you glide
Forth with lips parted, curious, eager-eyed :
Then will I spring all sudden to your sight
And pelt your hair with flowers of living light
And we will laugh, take hands, and side by side

Run down the darkness breathless : separate
To slip around the moon and meet again
Dodge 'neath the rearing thunder : naked-free
Dive from the rainbow to the green dawn sea :
Catch joy with the wind's cloak, and lie in wait
To snare love in a net of silver rain.

April

At the heels of his green-winged sandals
The howling March-Dogs race :
And the sound of his mocking laughter
Floats back through the plains of space.

Pale amethyst and moonstones
He scatters across the day :
And he steals with a net of rainbows
On the track of the birds of May.

A sun, like a lucent primrose,
Is tracing the azure veins
'Neath his skin of apple-blossom,
Agleam with the sluicing rains.

His childish face is downcast,
He has dropped on a bended knee,
From his hands, like curling snowflakes,
The struggling buds burst free.

His heart-beats stir the cloudlets,
Young stars caress his hair,
And his lips have kissed a shadow
As it passed through the sparkling air.

O, the Gods who love young April,
Have crowned him with golden death,
For he drowns in the midst of dancing,
In the waves of the gorse's breath.

Cendres d'Or

A WEARINESS has come upon my youth
And I am very old—always I see
The naked flesh in which the heart of truth
Beats mockingly.

I have read books and hearts until my soul
Is tired past telling and my dreams are slain :
And I have been too greedy of the goal
'Tis death to gain.

The centuries of withered love and strife [feet,
Have crushed my heart beneath their listless
My lips have kissed the painted mouth of life
Nor found it sweet.

I see chill visions where some men see God,
The future melts into a languid breath,
The past is a dim desert where I trod
Behind pale death.

Lo, I have mocked at everything on earth,
I have found laughter in the sacred fires,
And now the very stars regard with mirth
My dead desires.

I, who am young, have drunk of weariness :
The roses are all plucked, the tales all told,
I taste the ashes of the flame's caress
—Ashes of gold.

The Childhood of Salome

I.

BEHOLD what homage of the unhidden skies
Is hers. The noon sun proud and passionate
Has kissed her slim feet like brown butterflies,
The moon has carved her profile delicate,
And as she dances in the laughing light
Her eyes are like the sapphires of the night.

Yet as the music throbs a monotone,
Like poppies falling from the hands of noon,
It tells her dancing limbs of lands unknown,
Where the gold sun may kiss the silver moon,
Where dream-winged sea-foam to the sunset
 blows,
And starlight lingers in the crimson rose.

II.

The dark rosebud of love's sweet flame she seems
A spirit dwelling in a flower of fire,

The starry soul of the white desert's heat,
A perilous blossom of the heart's desire.
The gods have sandalled her with stormy
dreams,
And, lest she mingle with the burning air,
Have set the crown of night upon her hair,
And they have filled her eyes with forest mirth
And mists of sorrowing, and destiny
Of those whom the immortals love on earth,
And flung the stars beneath her childish feet—
Her dancing feet that mock eternity.

Song for his Lady to whom he offereth Tulips and Lilac

COME sing my lute, of tulips bending low

In slanting rain :

The proud, still tulips loved her long ago

In antique Spain.

The royal tulips bow to her, for she

Hath plucked the fruit of passion, delicately :

Ah, statelily hath plucked the purple fruit !

Then fill these tulip-cups with melody

O sweet my lute !

Come sing the gracious lilac-tree, that sways

Amid the breeze,

To misty songs of unremembered days

More fair than these.

The cloud-kissed lilac bows to her, for she

Hath drunk the wine of dreaming, perilously :

Ah recklessly hath drunk the silver wine !

Then drench these lilac flowers with melody

Poor lute of mine.

Vassalage

A LEADER of my youth, girded with song
Now passeth from the Hill of Calvary.
His slender blade which, delicately-strong,
Hath long time held my boyhood's fealty
Hangs at his side mourning, disconsolate :
That trembling sword forged of the silver rain
High-tempered of the sun, and dedicate
To Her who weeps upon this Mount of Pain
Shines now, in grief, like lightning scabbarded,
Piercing the dark with beauty, beckoning
Down from the burning glory of the dead
To where the ghost-white dawn lies quivering.
Flash forth poor sword of mine, that thou and I
May hail yon dream-girt leader passing by !

The Friar

THE birds salute in love the wandering friar
For stars, the Virgin's flowers, have made him
Slowly he paces between tree and briar, [wise.
The earth smiles up to meet his down-cast eyes,
And (for the sake of Mary, Ireland's Queen)
He signeth with the Cross this woodland green.

The flowers of the wood are greeting him
Joyous he is, and quiet of brow and lip,
He passes softly 'mid the shadows dim
The silence kisses him in fellowship.
And in his eyes there dwells the peace of God
(Because on Erin's earth Saint Brigid trod.)

The scent of rain hails him with homage sweet,
A sighing breath rustles from tree to tree,
A fall of leaves whispers around his feet,
A rushing wind arises suddenly :
He kneeleth trembling, and his face is pale
(For love of Christ Who fared through Innis-
fail.)

“The Charm of Michael with the Shield”

THE holy quest, the gay adventuring
Wake with the wind, strong in their antique
power ;

The lost princesses beckon secretly,
Like lilies in the darkling streets they flower,
And nightingales amid the traffic sing
Of pomegranates drooping from the tree
Beneath the sun's too-heavy gift of gold,
Of pale knights languishing in sad duress
To die perchance ere yonder clock have tolled.

Some live who may not rule the past with scorn ;
Nor ever pass the dark tower unamazed,
Leaving unchallenged by the ivory horn
The secret echoes slumbering within.
Amid the throng that march with heads
upraised

Wearing bright garments of futurity
Clear-eyed, they see no faces of their kin,
They cannot know that fair security,
Nor what enchantments weave that dazzling
spell

Over the eyes to make them credulous
That every giant is a windmill now
And only vapour fills the pit of hell
—Not theirs to soar on wings diaphanous
With eager lightning bound upon the brow
Toward the dawn. These go in dimmer dress
Amid a twilight of autumnal ways
Threading the sunny turbulence of days,
Where dragons habitations as of old
Are all around, and where the shadows play
Round wayside shrine, and crests like flames
upcast,
And shields like lakes of light from opened skies,
The clear fine glimmer of the hermit's cell,

And swords as stainless as the moon's white ray
And spears like starry thoughts made visible,
And all the dreaming fires of chivalry
The Celt once kindled with his torch of gold.

The song of the wind is of some high emprise
Whence may be won in faith and courtesy,
The silvern armour of antiquity
The knighthood of the nobly-dreaming past.

The Student

EACH snatches from the dull ephemeral
Some star-eternal second, like the drip
Snatched from the ocean by the sea-gull's dip :
And each calls Love that gleam sidereal,
Whether it be in pain, or carnival.
Or sacrament, or thirst of heart and lip :
Silent amid my books fair comradeship
I have felt love, friend-hearted, mystical.

Pausing at night in joyous weariness
While like a soul the lamp burns quietly,
I feel my books throng round in splendid hosts,
Divine to strengthen, human to caress,
And all things living fade to pallid ghosts
Before the dead that crowd eternity.

Vision

THE storm is come, and I am set
In kingly ways apart :
The wind, a wild dim rose, is wet
With red blood of my heart.

Come death, and find in me a swan
That, with the storm entwined,
May leave a dew of song upon
The dim rose of the wind.



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